

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 MCT-01 ARA-10
/089 W

-----039128 251102Z /11

O R 250942Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6827
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0364

DEPT PLEASE PASS DIA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, WA
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: INCREASED HOSTILITIES AND TENSION IN THE
OPERATIONAL AREA.

1. SUMMARY: SWAPO GUERRILLA ACTIVITY HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY
OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS AND SAG HAS HINTED AT POSSIBLE COUNTER-
ACTION AGAINST SWAPO BASES IN ANGOLA. END SUMMARY.

2. GUERRILLA ACTIVITY HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE
LAST FEW WEEKS IN THE "NORTHERN OPERATIONAL AREA" OF NAMIBIA.
RECENT INCIDENTS INCLUDE THE FEB. 7 ASSASSINATION OF THE
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OVAMBO MINISTER OF HEALTH (CAPE TOWN 0237), BOLDER AND
DEEPER INFILTRATION BY GUERRILLAS INTO CAPRIVI (CAPE TOWN
03269, THE RECENT REPORTED ABDUCTION OF A LARGE NUMBER
OF CHILDREN FROM THE ANGLICAN SCHOOL IN OVAMBO (CAPE TOWN 0343),
AND AN AMBUSH OF A SADF PATROL, WHICH RESULTED IN
THE DEATH OF THREE SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS (CAPE TOWN 0326),
AND THE APPARENT CAPTURE OF ONE, REPORTED IN THE PRESS FEB. 24.

IN A SUBSEQUENT "CLEAN UP" OPERATION, TWO MORE SOUTH AFRICANS AND A REPORTED 10 TERRORISTS WERE KILLED.

3. ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT BY THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA COMMAND REPORTED IN THE PRESS (FEB. 23), THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, P.W. BOTHA, HAS APPEALED TO THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT NOT TO MAKE THEIR MILITARY BASES IN SOUTH ANGOLA AVAILABLE TO TERRORISTS. THE MILITARY STATEMENT ALSO REPORTEDLY NOTED THAT THE OVAMBO GOVERNMENT HAD "URGENTLY APPEALED TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY TO FOLLOW THE TERRORISTS TO THEIR SO-CALLED NESTS IN ANGOLA." THE STATEMENT ADDED THAT "IT IS ALSO WELL KNOWN THAT IN THE PAST THE TERRORISTS HAVE ACTED IN SUCH A WAY THAT COULD HAVE CAUSED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICAN AND MPLA SOLDIERS ON THE BORDER."

4. CONCURRENTLY, TWO AFRIKAANS PRO-SAG NEWSPAPERS ON FEB. 23 EDITORIALY DENOUNCED SWAPO'S INTENSIFIED EFFORTS TO INTIMIDATE THE POPULATION (USIS JOHANNESBURG 0471). DIE VADERLAND, FEB. 23, SAID NEW "GRAVE DIMENSION" WAS INVOLVEMENT CUBAN AND ANGOLAN INSTRUCTORS. THE PAPERS RAISED THE QUESTION "SHOULD WE HIT HARD AT SWAPO CAMPS IN ANGOLA, AS THE RHODESIANS DID WITH TERRORISTS BASES IN MOZAMBIQUE, OR SIMPLY STICK TO A DEFENSIVE ROLE?"

5. THE SADF CONTINUES OCCASIONALLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE
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ATTACKS IT HAS MADE INTO ANGOLA AS PART OF HOT PURSUIT OPERATIONS. THE DEEPEST SUCH PENETRATION ANNOUNCED BY THE SADF AND APPARENTLY THE LARGEST IN SCOPE TOOK PLACE LAST DECEMBER (77 PRETORIA 6109). NO SIMILAR ACTION, HOWEVER, WAS REPORTED UNTIL THE INCIDENT LAST WEEK (CAPE TOWN 326).

6. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE GUERRILLA ACTIVITY OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, THE SAG MESSAGE TO ANGOLA, THE REPORTED SWA COMMAND STATEMENT AND THE CONCURRENT EDITORIALS TAKEN TOGETHER SUGGEST THAT NEW SADF INCURSIONS INTO ANGOLA COULD BE MOUNTED IN THE EVENT OF FURTHER INDICENTS. IF SUCH INCURSIONS TAKE PLACE THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT SADF FORCES MAY CLASH WITH MPLA/CUBAN FORCES CO-LOCATED IN THE AREA, WHICH WOULD ADD A NEW AND MORE SERIOUS DIMENSION WITH OBVIOUS COMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. IF THE PACE AND SCALE OF GUERRILLA ACTION IN NAMIBIA CONTINUE AT THE MOST RECENT LEVEL, PRESSURE IN THE SAG TO UNDERTAKE SUCH OPERATIONS MAY MOUNT. ONE RESTRAINING INFLUENCE WILL BE THE APPARENT SAG DESIRE TO BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL AT THIS TIME TO AVOID BEING SEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR UPSETTING THE WESTERN FIVE INITIATIVE ON NAMIBIA, BUT THERE IS NO

GUARANTEE AGAINST THE SADF GOING AFTER SWAPO BASES
IN ANGOLA IF THE SAG FEELS SUFFICIENTLY PROVOKED.

7. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, WE SUGGEST THE CONTACT GROUP
RECOMMEND TO CAPITALS LOW-KEY APPROACHES TO BOTH SWAPO
AND THE SAG URGING RESTRAINT.

8. THIS MESSAGE WAS COORDINATED WITH DAO.
BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

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